

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L MANILA 5060

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, RP

SUBJECT: MACAPAGAL STATUS

BEGIN SUMMARY: MACAPAGAL STILL IN SELF-IMPOSED RETREAT WHICH GOP ASSISTING BY CONTINUING LOCAL MEDIA BLACKOUT. TO KEEP IMAGE ALIVE, MACAPAGAL SENT LETTER TO AP'S ZEITLIN POSSIBLY TO ENCOURAGE CONTINUED FAVORABLE PLAY HE HAS RECEIVED FROM U.S. PRESS SO FAR. LETTER ASSERTS HE WILL CONTINUE FIGHT TO RESTORE DEMOCRACY. FILIPINO OBSERVERS THINK MACAPAGAL HAS DESTROYED WHAT LITTLE CREDIBILITY HE HAD AS OPPOSITION LEADER BY SEEKING ASYLUM. NEVERTHELESS, MACAPAGAL MAY ATTEMPT KEEP CAMPAIGN GOING. IF HE DOES, WE INCLINED TO THINK MARCOS UNDER PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES WILL TOLERATE IT WHILE RETAINING LOCAL MEDIA BLACKOUT ON MACAPAGAL. END SUMMARY.

1. MACAPAGAL CONTINUES IN SELF-IMPOSED RETREAT, APPARENTLY NOW AT FORBES PARK HOUSE, SINCE LEAVING AMBASSADOR'S RESIDENCE EARLY MORNING APRIL 2. HIS VANISHING ACT HAS PIQUED CURIOSITY OF MANY WHO PERSIST IN THINKING EMBASSY KNOWS WHERE HE IS OR PLAYED PART IN GETTING HIM OUT OF COUNTRY. WE ASSUME HIS WHEREABOUTS NO LONGER MYSTERY TO GOP.

2. AS QUICKLY AS GOP TURNED ON BELITTLING COMMENT OF
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MACAPAGAL'S ABORTIVE ASYLUM, IT HAS TURNED IT OFF.

PHILIPPINE MEDIA HAS NOT REFERRED TO MACAPAGAL FOR OVER A WEEK UNTIL BRIEF REFERENCE IN APRIL 12 TIMES JOURNAL ERNESTO GRANADA COLUMN SAYING THAT MACAPAGAL'S NATIONAL ASSEMBLY PROPOSAL WAS NON-STARTER BECAUSE ASSEMBLY WOULD REQUIRE CONVENING OF FORMER POLITICIANS WHICH NO ONE WANTED; NEVERTHELESS, GRANADA SAID, PHILIPPINE WOULD NEED POPULAR GOVERNMENT SOME TIME.

3. MACAPAGAL SENT LETTER TO ZEITLIN OF AP APRIL 10, PRESUMABLY INTENDED TO KEEP U.S. PRESS COMMENTARY GOING. MACAPAGAL ALLEGEDLY SAID "I AND OTHER FREEDOM LOVING FILIPINOS WILL DO OUR TASK OF LIBERATING OUR PEOPLE FROM DICTATORSHIP AND MALADMINISTRATION THE WAY WE SEE IT UNDER THE BEST CIRCUMSTANCES WITHIN OUR CONTROL. THIS STRUGGLE REQUIRES CONSTANT PRUDENCE, PRECISELY BECAUSE OF OUR FAITH IN ITS ULTIMATE SUCCESS. THIS IS THE VENTURE I HAVE EMBARKED ON...AND IN WHICH I INTEND TO UTILIZE THE LAWFUL AND PEACEFUL MEANS OF THE DEMOCRACY I BELIEVE IN AND CANNOT DEPART FROM." HE SAID THE CALL FOR NATIONAL ASSEMBLY HAD "OFFERED AN OPPORTUNITY TO THE AUTHORITARIAN RULERS WHOSE RELISH FOR POWER PRECIPITATELY DESPOILED OUR DEMOCRACY, SO THAT THEY CAN AVOID A VIOLENT END TO THEIR ILL-JUDGED MISADVENTURE...OUR COUNTRYMEN WERE STUNNED INTO SUBMISSION BY THE TIMING AND RUTHLESSNESS OF THE INTIMIDATION EMPLOYED TO INSTALL AN AUTHORITARIAN RULE, BUT THE INITIAL SHOCK WILL WEAR OFF." MACAPAGAL SAID HE DECLINED INTERVIEW WITH ZEITLIN BECAUSE OF "DIFFICULTY AND HAZARDOUSNESS OF STRUGGLE TO REGAIN CONSTITUTIONAL GOVERNMENT AND FREEDOM FOR FILIPINO PEOPLE."

4. WITH REFERENCE TO \$64 QUESTION AS TO WHY HE SOUGHT ASYLUM WITH U.S., MACAPAGAL SAID "WHILE I AM PREPARED TO UNDERGO CONFINEMENT OR WORSE FATE FOR THE SAKE OF THE FILIPINO PEOPLE, I DECIDED THAT SANCTUARY IN THE U.S. EMBASSY WOULD BE PREFERABLE TO AN UNLAWFUL ARREST BY AN AUTHORITARIAN GOVERNMENT." DEFENSE SECRETARY PONCE ENRILE TOLD AP APRIL 7 THAT MACAPAGAL NEVER IN DANGER OF ARREST. DAILY EXPRESS REPORTER TOLD USIS, HOWEVER, THAT HE HAD BEEN CALLED IN FOR QUESTIONING 3 DAYS IN ROW BECAUSE HE HAD SEEN METROCOM WARRANT FOR MACAPAGAL ARREST SIGNED CONFIDENTIAL

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BY GEN. OLIVAS EARLY MARCH (ABOUT SAME TIME AS PHILIPPINE NEWS HEADLINED THAT MACAPAGAL WROTE THREAT OF HOUSE ARREST). EMBASSY FINDS ARREST STORY DIFFICULT TO BELIEVE ALTHOUGH IT IS PROBABLY MACAPAGAL WAS BEING HARASSED.

5. COMMENT: VERY FEW FILIPINOS HAVE VOLUNTEERED COMMENT ON MACAPAGAL CASE BUT GOVERNMENT AND OPPOSITION SOURCES WHOM WE HAVE HEARD FROM SEEM TO CONCUR THAT MACAPAGAL'S

SEARCH FOR ASYLUM WAS MAJOR BLUNDER THAT BADLY DAMAGED SUCH LITTLE APPEAR AS MACAPAGAL HAD. WHETHER OR NOT MACAPAGAL THREATENED WITH ARREST, SO ARGUMENT GOES, HE DEMOLISHED ANY HOPE FOR RESPECT BY CHOOSING TO LEAP INTO AMERICAN AMBASSADOR'S HOUSE RATHER THAN STAND UP FOR HIS PROFESSED BELIEFS. MOST OBSERVERS SEEM TO AGREE IN ANY EVENT THAT MACAPAGAL WOULD BE CHOICE OF VERY FEW TO LEAD RESISTANCE TO MARCOS VIEW HIS PREVIOUS RECORD. MOREOVER, ISSUE OF NATIONAL ASSEMBLY, AS GRANADA OBSERVED, ATTRACTS LITTLE REAL INTEREST IN PHILIPPINES SINCE FEW EVEN IN OPPOSITION WANT TO RECONVENE OLD-TIME POLITICIANS.

6. ALTHOUGH MACAPAGAL HAS LITTLE FOLLOWING IN PHILIPPINES, HE MAY BE HEARTENED BY REACTION FROM AMERICAN PRESS. HE COULD BE TEMPTED TO KEEP ISSUE ALIVE IN BELIEF U.S. REACTION MIGHT EVENTUALLY EXERT PRESSURE ON MARCOS EITHER TO MOVE TOWARDS NATIONAL ASSEMBLY, TO KEEP HANDS OFF MACAPAGAL, AND/OR POSSIBLY TO REVIVE IMAGE OF MACAPAGAL AS CREDIBLE LEADER. MACAPAGAL'S FRIENDS WOULD NOT AGREE HE PURSUES MATTERS FROM SUCH MACHIAVELLIAN POINT OF VIEW; ON THE CONTRARY, THEY REGARD HIM AS SOMEWHAT NAIVE. BUT THEY DO AGREE THAT HE IS STUBBORN AND WILL KEEP ON PLUGGING ONCE HE HAS GOT UNDERWAY. IF MACAPAGAL DOES PLUG AWAY, MARCOS WILL HAVE TO DECIDE WHETHER TO TAKE NEEDLING FROM ABROAD WHILE NEGOTIATING WITH HIS (MARCOS') FRIENDS IN WASHINGTON, OR TAKE MORE DRASTIC MEASURES AGAINST MACAPAGAL. WE ARE INCLINED TO THINK MARCOS HAS ALSO EVALUATED DAMAGE MACAPAGAL DID TO HIMSELF AND UNDER PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCE WILL NOT DO ANYTHING EXCEPT TO CONTINUE TO DEPRIVE MACAPAGAL OF LOCAL PUBLICITY.
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